

Columnists Are Talking About ... The Champ Act

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WASHINGTON, D.C. -- The support just keeps coming in. Across America, columnists are endorsing the Children's Health and Medicare Protection (CHAMP) Act, Democratic legislation to provide health care to 11 million kids, improve Medicare's benefits for seniors and people with disabilities, and protect Medicare from Republican efforts to privatize the popular and successful program.

Marie Cocco in the Indianapolis Star, "Picking on tobacco, HMOs," 07/31/07:

"The logic of raising tobacco taxes and curtailing well-documented overpayments to managed-care companies that cover some Medicare patients, then using the funds to provide insurance to children in poor and working-class families, is better than politically perfect.

It boosts public health by reducing smoking. It spares taxpayers billions now wasted on propping up corporate insurers rather than treating Medicare patients…

In May, the Institute of Medicine said that "increasing taxes on cigarettes is one of the most effective ways to decrease smoking, particularly among adolescents." Hiking cigarette taxes not only would help cover kids without insurance. By reducing smoking, it would also make other kids -- and adults, for that matter -- healthier. And it would save taxpayers billions in future Medicaid and Medicare expenses to treat smoking-related diseases.

As
for reducing excessive payments to private Medicare managed-care plans -- proposed by the House, but not the Senate -- that, too, is better than shoveling billions into the coffers of the private insurance industry. Since the start of managed care in Medicare, proponents have argued that private plans would reduce costs. But the opposite has proved true. According to both government and private studies, Medicare managed care now costs taxpayers about 12 percent more per patient than it would to treat the very same patient through traditional, government-administered Medicare.”

Paul Krugman in the New York Times, “An Immoral Philosophy,” 07/30/07:

“Strange
to say, the administration, although determined to prevent any expansion of children's health care, is also dead set against any cut in Medicare Advantage payments.

What kind of philosophy says that it's O.K. to subsidize insurance companies, but not to provide health care to children?

Why
should Mr. Bush fear that insuring uninsured children would lead to a further "federalization" of health care, even though nothing like that is actually in either the Senate plan or the House plan? It's not because he thinks the plans wouldn't work. It's because he's afraid that they would. That is, he fears that voters, having seen how the government can help children, would ask why it can't do the same for adults.

And there you have the core of Mr. Bush's philosophy. He wants the public to believe that government is always the problem, never the solution. But it's hard to convince people that government is always bad when they see it doing good things. So his philosophy says that the government must be prevented from solving problems, even if it can. In fact, the more good a proposed government program would do, the more fiercely it must be opposed.”

Jack Levine in the Daytona Beach News-Journal, “Keep successful SCHIP sailing,” 07/29/07:

“SCHIP

has been the most successful and efficient of all our country's health reform efforts. The president and Congress must broaden the successful SCHIP program to make sure the remaining 9 million uninsured kids get the protection they deserve.”